



*"Home of the Thunderbirds"*

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October 6, 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The Intermediate Teaching Team want to highlight the importance of regular school attendance. Our team has noted a marked increase in absenteeism over the last few years and we want to alert the parent community to the implications of frequent or lengthy absences on learning.

An increasing number of students are away for extended periods of time, posing numerous academic and social-emotional challenges not only for the child, but also for the teacher and the class as a whole. While we understand that there are circumstances where students need to be kept home from school (illness, medical appointments or family illness, etc.) the number of students absent due to family vacation is steadily increasing. Also significant are the number of students who are pulled out regularly for extra-curricular activities.

Extensive educational research has been done on school absenteeism, chronic lateness and the impact it can have on academic achievement and social-emotional growth. For example, missing two days a month is considered "chronic absence" and found to negatively impact learning over time. While our teaching team does its best, it is impossible for staff to help students 'make up' what they have missed or adequately 'front-load' students with what they will be missing in the case of a planned absence.

While instructional planning is sequential and planned in advance, it is also dynamic and responsive to student interests and needs in the 'teachable' moment. Important foundational skills and concepts integral to units of inquiry are cultivated daily. When students return, subsequent lessons can be challenging to follow, even with the teachers' guidance, because it is impossible to recreate missed learning experiences. Furthermore, when students are away, they also miss the opportunity to work with their peers and develop valuable collaboration, communication and leadership opportunities. Completing work at home doesn't make up for learning with peers and teachers; many lessons are based on interactive activities that cannot be duplicated outside of the classroom.

While teachers do their best to assist students who have been away, direct classroom participation is by far the best way for students to learn. Students can experience anxiety when they return, since they can become worried about missed lessons. Extended or chronic absences and late arrivals can also cause social difficulties. Some of the information referenced in this letter can be found in the article, "The Problem of School Absenteeism: What you Need to Know," by Kate Kelly.

Again, the Intermediate Teaching Team understands that there are times when children will need to be kept home from school and we appreciate all that you do to support your child's learning. It is our most sincere hope that this letter clarifies the impact that absenteeism has on classroom learning and your child's achievement. We urge you to monitor your children's absences and we hope to continue working together to ensure student success.

Sincerely,  
Intermediate Teaching Team